

WALDO COUNTY FY 2009 BUDGET COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 31, 2008

PRESENT: Budget Committee Members Bill Sneed, James Bennett, Tim Biggs, Nakomis Nelson, Richard Desmarais, Harry Dean Potter, Richard Crossman; County Commissioner Donald Berry; County Clerk Barbara Arseneau. Also present were members of the Press and various County employees.

B. Sneed opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and called for nominations for Chairman of the Waldo County Budget Committee for the year 2009.

J. Bennett: I nominate Bill Sneed.

T. Biggs: Second.

B. Sneed: Any other nominations? All in favor?

Nomination passed unanimously.

B. Sneed: So be it. This is just an organizational thing, right, Barb? We're not supposed to do any business.

B. Arseneau: That's not necessarily the case. It's just that you don't have any departments here to question, but if you want to look through some things and have any specific questions you want me to take back, I'd be glad to do that.

B. Sneed: So, we have the budget, which is more than 60 days before November 7th. How did they arrive at that date?

B. Arseneau: I don't know.

B. Sneed: Just for the heck of it, I went today to the State Planning Office to look at LD-1 stuff from the previous year. It is a little hard to tell, other than the State, what the two other entities under LD-1 that are considered local (towns, counties and the school districts) are doing. We don't break them out separately, but they do have a text thing that says that between 2006 and 2007 the number of school districts exceeding LD-1 went from 69 percent to 82 percent. So, the towns and the counties are doing their part, and the school districts are driving us into bankruptcy. That should come as no shock to almost anybody.

N. Nelson: The way the State comes up with the numbers of what should be a school budget just doesn't apply to the small rural schools. They look at the number of students that exists on Islesboro, and they tell us what we should be running the school for. It doesn't much matter because we're still running the school, staffing the school, maintaining buses. There is no way we can do it for \$250,000.00. It's a number that is absurd to even begin to think you can begin to run a school for that.

B. Sneed: It may be absurd, but it is the law. We have a now, not-missed school superintendent for Bucksport and MSD 18 who didn't even know what LD-1 was. She is the former Deputy Director of the Department of Education, and she just didn't care. It was a problem for the towns and the counties and the state – it wasn't her problem. Well, I've got news for you, Dear, it is your problem for you because it's the law. If you don't like it, change it.

N. Nelson: It's not the law if the taxpayers voted at the town meeting to overrule it.

B. Sneed: The point of the matter is that they are driving the rest of us into the poorhouse. Like it or not, that's the fact. We can cut this budget by 50 percent, and if you look at the rates at which local town taxes have gone down, which is 100th of one percent in the last year, it's being held up by the schools.

N. Nelson: I don't argue that.

T. Biggs: I would like to see the number of people who show up for the town meeting in our town show up to vote on the school budget. They're just not getting it, but they come out at the town meeting and they want to pick every line of every department apart. They don't show that enthusiasm for the review of the school budget.

B. Sneed: I think we had three people show up for the school budget.

N. Nelson: We don't have that problem. We have a good turn-out for every meeting.

B. Sneed: You'd have to line up your budget to be the same time as the school budget; an end-of-year thing.

N. Nelson: Yes, try to do it all in one meeting. Now we break it up. When we voted, we had a referendum for the school renovations, and I think it was something like 320 people voted. It was 80% of eligible voters voting on it.

B. Sneed: Part of the thing – Tim, you said, "Line them up," is that most of our towns work on a calendar year, and the school works on a fiscal year, so...

T. Biggs: I guess we could change the town meeting time.

B. Sneed: Anyway, that's just poking through this stuff today...that's all I can find. Most of the rest of us are doing our fair share.

R. Desmarais: We did not exceed it last year in our town. It was on there, but we didn't have to vote on it, because we had no bonds that drove us over. That can't go on forever – you can't keep staying below LD-1 when the figures say that you should be moving along at the rate of LD-1. It's going to catch up with you - three or four years out you are going to be just compressing the dollars you have when the needs are not being compressed.

T. Biggs: That's a problem, isn't it?

R. Desmarais: Bill, have you taken any motions here tonight?

B. Arseneau: Yes.

R. Desmarais: One that has been bothering me - and it came up on the Candidate's Night - health insurance premiums, employee's benefits; several things under Employee Benefits. I think they should be broken down and put as line items in the departments, so we get the true cost of running each department. It is not going to make a difference dollar-wise, one way or the other, but it gives us a true cost of what it takes to run a department. Last year at the Budget Committee meeting, I heard one department head...somebody asked a question in the effect that, "not only you have a large number of employees, but a large number of medical benefits," and he [department head] wasn't concerned about that because that went into a different block. I don't think that's right, and I know that in our town we break it down into health insurance premiums, FICA, Maine State Retirement...they are all listed in the department, so we get a true cost of running it.

****D. Desmarais: I am going to make a motion that we break these down the same way that the costs for each department, medical costs, employee benefits, be shown in the department.**

J. Bennett: I will second it.

B. Sneed: Discussion?

R. Desmarais: I think I pretty much discussed it.

T. Biggs: Who does that?

B. Sneed: I guess we're going to have discussion now. Can we do it?

B. Arseneau: We don't have it broken down that way. It would mean creating documentation to do that.

T. Biggs: Is there any way to estimate benefits for each person?

B. Arseneau: I can talk to the Human Resources Director.

R. Desmarais: They do it in the towns.

B. Arseneau: Right. How many employees do you have - I'm just curious?

D. Berry: Correct. That's a point that is a real here - is how many people.

B. Arseneau: We have 80-some-odd; it just creates a bit of a challenge.

D. Berry: This is a total different world than your town is.

J. Bennett: But once you did it, it would be....

D. Berry: You also have another piece in this deal right now, too; and that is the contracts that exist. They don't exist yet. You have several things going here that don't all just fall into the same parameters that you have when you look at a town. It's a total different world here, and you're talking about - can we do this? Yes, I think we can do this, but it's also going to mean more labor as far as our staff having to do more things.

R. Desmarais: When a candidate says that it costs \$1.4 million of a \$6 million dollar budget for employee's benefits, I think the citizens are pretty curious as to what is going on with that \$1.4 million and I agree.

D. Berry: All you are asking for, then, is the same total within the budget. If I understand you correctly, you are just looking at.....well, what we've done right now with the Jail. We have had to pull the Jail costs out of this because the State is doing that now. Our numbers show that in here where that has been reduced by a given percent because of that. So, can it be done? Yes, it can be done, but it still is not going to change the bottom line.

R. Desmarais: Absolutely, but.....

D. Berry: The thing that puzzles me is where and what is the goal or the purpose of doing that?

R. Desmarais: How about one word - transparency? We would know where it is. We would know where it's going. It is not bundled and set in one package where somebody can point their finger and say, "\$1.4 million on a \$6 million budget, what's going on?" Transparency. That's what I am asking. Other towns do it, businesses do it; that is where I am coming from, Don.

D. Berry: Okay. What do you think, Barb?

B. Arseneau: Can I ask this? I mean, obviously, I think as he said, we can spend the time and put this together. I guess what I would ask is from a working, functioning budget point of view, I would ask that you not ask the department heads to code all of these things individually out of their budgets, because it will make payroll a nightmare. If you want to see what it looks like on a spreadsheet, that's one thing. Trying to divide it up amongst all those departments to try and get it coded and all that - that can be kind of a hassle.

R. Desmarais: I want to see what it is reflected under every department - where it's going. Get rid of this Employee Benefits as a standout item and put it in each department. Now, you can draw it out of the same account if you want, but put it on paper where it belongs.

B. Arseneau: Okay, on paper. That is mostly what you are looking for - not necessarily, although you are saying that you want that budget to be gone. If you are saying that you want that separate budget to be gone, then you are making an operational thing for each department; and they are going to have to break out FICA, to break out all of that for....Well, actually by default, it will end up breaking out for all the part-time people. We have 143 employees when you include part-time.

R. Desmarais: Major companies do it that way.

B. Arseneau: They have the staff to do it, too.

R. Desmarais: That's true. We are not inventing the wheel here.

B. Arseneau: I think we can accomplish what you want without actually changing the operational part of the budget.

R. Desmarais: As long as I see the figures where they belong. In other words, it costs "X" amount to run. Throw a department out there that has employees: CC [Communications Center]; Sheriff. As long as I see what the insurance is, where the money is going, the different things in here - Maine Public Employees Retirement system - as long as those numbers are broken down into the department budget, I don't care if you pay it out of another department, but I would like to see it in the department - that's what I'm looking for - transparency.

B. Arseneau: So, you are not trying to get rid of this separate coding system that we have here for it.

R. Desmarais: If you can operate both, fine; but put those figures in the department, so we can see the bottom line on that.

B. Arseneau: So you could see it on a spreadsheet, separated out? We'll see what we can come up with.

R. Desmarais: What is the true cost of running the department?

B. Sneed: Nakomis, do you have a question?

N. Nelson: It's more of a half-comment, half-question - I see there is some diminishing return where we are going to create a tremendous amount of work for little value. I think that these questions, you know, when the department chairs come to speak, they can be asked that. Again, maybe in an ideal world that transparency per department would be wonderful, but is that going to allow us to create a better budget? I don't see that the work we are going to ask other people to do is going to have any necessary value.

R. Desmarais: I think we will have a better grip on what the total cost of the department is by seeing those figures.

B. Sneed: Harry?

H. Potter: I am just wondering, under this proposal, who has control of those employees? Is it each department that can control those benefit costs?

D. Berry: No.

B. Sneed: I think it falls to the Commissioners, doesn't it?

H. Potter: So, it is informational. You want to know costs for that department.

B. Sneed: Dick?

R. Crossman: Quite a bit of that is already contractual, so....

D. Berry: It will be.

B. Sneed: Yes, if it is not now, it will be. It falls under the Commissioners' stuff.

H. Potter: Do the department heads know employee number five has 20 years in so they're getting a \$1,000.00 a year benefit?

B. Sneed: That is what Dick's asking.

H. Potter: That's what I'm saying – do the department heads know that, what each employee is getting so they could come and say this is part of my budget, or is that just somewhere out there?

B. Arseneau: They can tell you all their pay steps; they can tell you how long they have been here. They can probably guess pretty closely as to the benefits, but unfortunately for the department heads, a lot of this information is confidential, too. We don't disseminate who has what retirement – there are some things we have to be careful because they fall under the confidentiality clause. They would probably guess pretty close, but to give you an exact figure, no. It is something that moves around all the time – we have employees that have children, so that changes the premium; if they have had children, some drop their spouse...it's just constantly in a state of flux, as well, which I am sure you know.

R. Crossman: When we review a budget line for a department, can we recommend cuts or increases in that benefit line? Is that how it's done?

B. Sneed: As it stands now for two reasons: 1) it's a separate item; and 2) a lot of it is going to become contractual, which means that it falls under their laps forever and anon.

R. Crossman: Again, I'm just trying to see what the impact would be. I understand allocate costs by department instead of having this one big basket over here, which accumulates from each department.

J. Bennett: I guess I just feel, and I'll pick on the Emergency Management because that is the top one. It says that it is a 2.91 percent increase which really is not right because you, when you come down to Employee Benefits, and there is some sort of an increase there.

B. Sneed: I think it is a decrease, isn't it?

J. Bennett: Well, it's a decrease in the whole thing.

B. Sneed: It is a minus 36%.

J. Bennett: It is for the whole County, but their benefits are not added into this, so there has to be an increase there; the decrease would come where some of these minuses are, I would think. Like Registry of Deeds, they got rid of one person so that would be a decrease in it.

B. Arseneau: Well, you don't know that just because you don't really....it fluctuates. Maybe right now that might be the case, but someone who hasn't been taking health insurance may have a need for health insurance in the middle of the year. It is a moving, fluctuating dynamic.

J. Bennett: But, it might be somewhere else; it would be in another department.

B. Sneed: Would a sensible, and/or fair way of doing it be to arrive at some average figure for some average employee and just say, we have "X" number of employees times \$6,000? Would we be anywhere near in the ballpark for something like that? Give or take a thousand, two thousand dollars...

J. Bennett: They did that for us two years ago, but that didn't tell where the increase and stuff was. It just said they had "X" number of employees for this, and "X" number of employees for that.

B. Arseneau: That is the other thing, too, when you have small departments, you start to creep into that confidentiality issue where you can start guessing who's got what.

D. Berry: Absolutely.

B. Arseneau: That is what makes it difficult. If you want to keep the confidentiality in there, we could put down we have 60 employees who take family insurance, we have 45 employees who are single, we have 35.....you know, we could do it that way and show what those premiums are. Is that what you are looking for? So, you can't start guessing who and what department has what, because that really is crossing the line.

R. Desmarais: I want to see it come right into the departments and what these employees in the department are going to cost. I would assume that once you get your computer set up this would be a simple....

B. Arseneau: Again, I am concerned because with some of the small departments, you will look at it and go, "Oh, two people; oh, they both have Maine State Retirement?" That is really NOT anyone's [several people talking loudly over each other here].

B. Sneed: On the other hand, I can go into the library at the University of Maine, and I can pick up a book that is about that thick [hand motion] that lists every employee for the whole University system with every one of their benefits and salary by name.

B. Arseneau: Not by benefits?

B. Sneed: By name. I can find out what they make, what their health insurance is, what their retirement is, and if you don't think that's the case, there is a right wing political action committee down in Portland that has published all of it on the web. So, I'm not totally buying this employee

confidentiality stuff, because if it's good enough for the University system, it's good enough for you guys. So, I'm not totally buying it. What, Don?

D. Berry: The whole thing here is: Can we do that? Yes, we can do that.

B. Sneed: It goes back to Nakomis' question – what is the value of doing it versus Dick's question?

D. Berry: That is where I was just coming from – what do you see as the absolute value of doing that thing?

R. Desmarais: I'll go back to transparency.

D. Berry: To attack departments – is that the question?

R. Desmarais: No, no – transparency.

D. Berry: Define transparency for me here.

R. Desmarais: If somebody wants to see what it costs to run a department; Joe Citizen wants to see this. Joe the Plumber comes waltzing in; he wants to see this. You got it by department; it is right there and the public has access to it. I'm a town employee because I get a stipend, I'm a town employee. Anybody can walk it and see what I get for a stipend.

D. Berry: Yes.

R. Desmarais: Anybody can walk in and say, "I'm a taxpayer; I want to see what these employees are getting and what's deducted, and..."

D. Berry: Absolutely.

R. Desmarais: So, this confidentiality, when you're a public employee, you are really on the thin edge of confidentiality when it comes to your paycheck because the taxpayer is paying it. That's what I want to see. To hear that statement that was made at that Candidates' Night: "\$1.4 million on a \$6 million budget – employees benefits, what are these benefits all about; where are they going?" Nobody has the answer – not us – you guys do.

D. Berry: Well, and you still come right back to that word of "where" are they going? Define what you mean "where are they going." To me, "where are they going" means that part of them are going into their health insurance for all of our employees, part of it is going into retirement, part of it is going into FICA, part of it is going into another slot. That gives you all of the employees without any personal attachment to them and without any department attachment to them. We know we have to run a Sheriff's Department; we know we have to run a Deeds Department; and I am really wondering what this transparency is supposed to gain except for knowing who is in what department.

R. Desmarais: And, we know that it costs \$1.4 million and it's going to cost \$1.4 million when it's done.

D. Berry: No, it isn't.

R. Desmarais: I know.

D. Berry: It isn't going to cost that.

R. Desmarais: New figures, Don; I understand that.

D. Berry: Right!

[Chairman rapped gavel for order.]

R. Desmarais: I mean, there we are – we're just moving the money to where it belongs, breaking it out and putting it where it belongs.

N. Nelson: I think the money is quite clearly where it belongs; it's employee benefits, and I think to say we don't know what each department costs isn't really accurate, because we DO know what each department costs. They're broken down here, and you DO know how many employees are in those departments, and you can figure it out. It doesn't much matter if you guess a little wrong on the employee benefits and their bottom on police isn't where it is and septic inspection, it's different. That doesn't matter – they are employee benefits, and we are going to pay them, we aren't going to change them drastically; and I just don't see how that is going to change the world. There's no transparency that we are adding.

B. Sneed: We are going to pay them; we're going to pay them whether they're sitting in a bundle or whether they are sitting in the departments.

H. Potter: I guess I think it is reasonable to want to know what the total cost for a department is.

R. Desmarais: That's where I'm coming from.

H. Potter: So, somehow allocated without knowing Social Security numbers and whatever else.

B. Sneed: Dick, do you have any thoughts?

R. Crossman: I have many thoughts, but I'll just...

B. Sneed: Keep them to yourself?

J. Bennett: I think if some taxpayer walked in off the street and asked, I think they have to give it to them. I don't think it's being unfair or anything to ask for it.

B. Sneed: Tim?

T. Biggs: Well, I have to agree there. It would be pretty onerous to try and figure out exactly what the benefits are for each department. I would be happy if we had a somewhat ballpark figure. A part-timer doesn't health insurance, but he does get – what other benefits would go into the benefit section that a part-timer would get?

B. Arseneau: Some, depending on how many hours they put in, are eligible for deferred compensation match; they are eligible to enroll and have a match, but they have to meet a minimum criteria of hours per year. So, there is some that would fall in place for. FICA, obviously, applies to everybody.

N. Nelson: Could you take the total number of full-time employees the County has, take the total cost of full-time employee benefits, divide it up, and then use that? I mean, how far out would we be if we just used that as a benchmark?

B. Sneed: That was my question a couple of minutes ago. How far off would we be?

B. Arseneau: Actually, that probably wouldn't be bad at all.

D. Berry: Not much.

B. Arseneau: So, you are saying lump the FICA, all that stuff, into a total for that department. I think we could be pretty close on that.

N. Nelson: You know, the average full-time employee gets \$6,000.00 in benefits.

B. Arseneau: Yes, I could go with that.

B. Sneed: Dick Desmarais, could you live with that?

R. Desmarais: I would really prefer what the motion states.

B. Sneed: Then, it is time to take a vote on the motion. All in favor of Dick's motion. All opposed. [Per B. Arseneau's request, an individual vote count was taken.]

B. Sneed: In favor: H. Potter, J. Bennett, R. Desmarais. All opposed: B. Sneed, T. Biggs, N. Nelson, R. Crossman. Motion fails.

****N. Nelson: I move that we come up with an average employee benefits per employee, full-time and part-time and then break that down for each department; and based on that average, so we have a rough idea of what the total cost is per department's budget.**

T. Biggs: I second that.

B. Sneed: Any discussion on that motion?

J. Bennett: I think it's a waste of time because you are not going to know where it goes, so as far as my money, they are wasting their time.

B. Sneed: I guess the question is are they going to waste less time doing like this, Jim, or more time doing like the other?

J. Bennett: But, it doesn't tell us what each department's getting.

B. Sneed: It's going to be close.

T. Biggs: It will save a lot of bureaucracy and paperwork.

N. Nelson: It will be really close, I think; and I think if in one year we are a little off in that one department, it would come back the next year.

J. Bennett: What you're asking for, they did it for us a couple of years ago; and it didn't work, so why would it work this year? It is a waste of time and effort and paper.

B. Sneed: Dick, do you have something to say?

R. Crossman: Well, this information has to be out there somewhere. This stuff is being paid out; it's just a matter of getting it compiled. I think if it's easier just to do an average, then do an average. You are not going to get an exact, right-down-to-the-penny, what it costs each department, but I think it would get you closer to what each department actually costs.

N. Nelson: I think if you looked at inaccuracy in terms of a percentage of the total budget, it would be negligible.

B. Sneed: Don, do you have any thoughts? You are allowed to talk.

D. Berry: I know that. I know that.

B. Sneed: Could you guys live with something like that?

D. Berry: That's not that difficult to do. We know what the total cost is that we are outlaying in benefits all the time.

B. Sneed: You have a pretty good idea what a part-timer costs you versus what a full-timer costs?

D. Berry: Sure. We can do that.

B. Sneed: There has been a motion made and motion seconded. All in favor of N. Nelson's motion to do an average: B. Sneed, T. Biggs, N. Nelson, H. Potter, R. Crossman. All opposed: J. Bennett, R. Desmarais. Motion carries.

B. Sneed: Tim?

T. Biggs: Question?

B. Sneed: Sure, not for me, I hope.

T. Biggs: I'm just throwing this out there. I see that your benefits have dropped a lot this year, what you propose for 2009. Can you give us a general why?

D. Berry: A couple of things come into play there. As you know, last year we went self-insured on the health insurance. It has worked very, very well. It is probably the most positive thing that I have seen in government for a long time. It has allowed us to take and bring down our total costs. As you see, we are asking for \$925,000.00 and part of that, of course, is employee benefits. Looking at that line, you take that \$925,000.00 and back it off with what the Jail portion is. In that category, we come up with \$585,945.00 in that health insurance category. What it has allowed us to do is the fact that we are not paying AETNA, we are not paying Anthem or anyone else. We really are paying into our own account. I don't know what the absolute balance is right now in that, but it's in excess of \$300,000.00 in health insurance balance. We've had a good year, too. So, our goal here and the advice of our insurance people and our accountants is that we try to build that balance that sits there to about \$1 million. If we have another good year this year, then we will see a change there. The other benefit that is going to occur, too, is that everyone in the County, and this includes contracts – I'm not speaking out of turn here – even though they are not ratified, they all know it is 5% this year of their premiums. Next year we haven't set it for the entire County, but for the contracts will probably be in at about 10 percent, as far as contribution to the health insurance. That, in turn, is going to help us as far as bringing down the costs. We also have another program that we are bringing out the end of December or the first of January – every citizen of this County will be given a prescription card that costs them absolutely nothing and costs us nothing. It is part of NACO; it is part of the National Organization of Counties. They have a program that is being used nationwide, and it was one of the things I went after when I got into this position, to get our membership in NACO, which is \$750.00. Those [prescription] drug cards can go to anyone. It means that somebody who has absolutely no insurance is at least going to get something. It will average out - they estimate in all of their documentation - that it will probably average out 20 to 22% savings for people. To me, this is a really positive thing that is going on. It means that if you have two cards, and I will be carrying two cards; whichever one gets you the best buy on the medicine is the one you're going to use. It's the one they will honor, too. Those things, once we release the whole plan, those cards will be available. In some counties - Penobscot has been doing this - they put them right in the drug stores. The drug stores are handing them out. To me, this is a really positive thing that we are doing as a county for people, and I look at that as part of my mission. I look at the benefit end of it – yes, we're not done contracts yet; they have not been ratified at all, and that's pointed out in this document to you people. It has been a long year since last December. I have been hours and hours and hours in negotiations. The sad piece of that is the fact that our total cost right now for attorneys' fees is somewhere around \$92,000.00, ala contracts. Oh, my God.

R. Desmarais: Do you have a projection on a timeframe on when this might come to an end?

D. Berry: Soon. That's all I can really say right now, you know that.

R. Desmarais: On this prescription card, who is backing that up? Who is making up this 22 to 25%? The Government?

D. Berry: There is a donor in that whole process and along with NACO - NACO is part of that all - the counties in this country that belong to NACO are part of that \$750.00 we pay in dues. That will come back to us multifold, I would hope, to the citizens of our towns.

R. Desmarais: You mean the North Atlantic Treaty Organization?

D. Berry: No, NACo, not NATO.

R. Desmarais: Oh, okay. All right.

D. Berry: So, to me, that is one of the biggest things, as far as us being able to look at this program of reducing the total costs to our people in health insurance. It's pretty significant. Last year we were \$949,000.00 in health insurance, and this year we are \$925,000.00.

T. Biggs: I don't understand who is paying for the medications, then. Obviously, the counties are not paying for them.

D. Berry: No, the counties under that whole dues package and everything that goes in from all over the country.

T. Biggs: But, everybody from all over the country has prescriptions that costs thousands of dollars a year. I can't....

D. Berry: The average is 20 to 22% savings.

T. Biggs: Discount on their...

D. Berry: Yes, on their prescriptions. If a person went somewhere like Walmart, they would get whichever card they were getting the best buy on - Walmart would give them that buy. It may not be this one; it may be Anthem, but this is what we are seeing right now for it.

R. Desmarais: I think the question is how can \$750.00 do this if it's every county...

D. Berry: Well, because this is a huge national organization, that's why; and I'm sure they are getting some funding out of the federal coffers, as well.

N. Nelson: It's like when you go to Canada or Mexico and buy drugs for a fraction of what they cost in this country.

R. Desmarais: They're not going to supply a county for \$750.00.

N. Nelson: I guess what I'm really saying is that drug costs are probably traded with about the same degree of certainty as oil costs. I would think that an organization like this could work with major drug manufacturers and lobby some kind of a deal or.....

D. Berry: What's the name of that company, Barb? Caremark?

B. Arseneau: Caremark. Yes.

D. Berry: Caremark is the name of the actual provider of the card.

R. Desmarais: This seems like a big, almost like an employment benefit thing – it's tucked over and you rarely get the answers.

D. Berry: No, not really.

R. Crossman: If I remember right, Walmart sells 200 drugs for \$4.50, right?

D. Berry: Right.

T. Biggs: So, maybe NACo only allows them to buy generic drugs.

D. Berry: No, NACo would cover both; they get their best benefit with the generic. We will release more on that – we've just been right out straight with the...

B. Arseneau: We're still in the process of getting it going, so there's....

D. Berry: Right, along with everything else we're doing.

N. Nelson: Go to a car dealer and they tell you they're selling your new car below their costs, you know something's not right there.

H. Potter: Well, it's like anything – the more you buy, the more you save, right?

B. Sneed: I guess the thing that worries me here is if you look at the statute and it says that in order to assess a county tax, the Commissioners, prior to November 7thshall prepare estimates – and I want to know how good these estimates are. Is there going to be a November surprise or a December surprise here? Because if there is, you're not..

D. Berry: As the document says in it...

B. Sneed: Which document?

D. Berry: This. [Pointing to the inside of the budget binder.]

B. Sneed: We just got it; we haven't had a chance to look at it.

D. Berry: As it says in it at the head of each one of those sections, "The wages are estimated at 4% increase for budgeting purposes until set by union contracts." I can't tell you more than that. I'm sorry.

B. Sneed: The law says that you must provide specific amounts for personnel services, contractual services, commodities, debt services and capital expenditures - MUST provide. So, if you guys come back to us in the middle of December and say it's going to be 9%, I'll tell you what, I ain't going to vote for your budget! And, you're going to go into January 1st with the same budget you had this year!

D. Berry: How can I say it? It won't be 9%; it won't be 8%. Okay?

B. Sneed: Okay. We've got nothing to go on but that.

D. Berry: I've basically, honest to God, said too much right now.

B. Sneed: Fine, fine.

D. Berry: Because these are contracts; I can NOT, and those of you who have worked with contracts know that,

B. Sneed: Fine.

D. Berry: But that's how it is.

B. Sneed: Well, come middle of December, we'll see how it is.

D. Berry: Well, Sir, don't threaten us.

B. Sneed: NO! HEY, DON! The law says that you're supposed to provide us with a reasonable estimate of the budget for the coming year!

D. Berry: That is what we have provided.

R. Desmarais: Well, it had darn well better be reasonable.

D. Berry: That is what we have provided is a reasonable budget.

B. Sneed: I tell you what; it had better be reasonable because if we come back here in the middle of December and all of a sudden something is going through the bloody roof; well...

D. Berry: I understand.

B. Sneed: We're not going to be played! No, no offense to you, we're not going to be played.

D. Berry: Gentlemen.

B. Sneed: This is close to the line; this is close to what is going to come in?

D. Berry: Correct.

B. Sneed: Thank you. That's all I'm worried about.

D. Berry: And it's all I'm worried about, too.

B. Sneed: Good. Good. We're all worried then, I think.

D. Berry: We have three contracts right now, and I can almost guarantee you we will probably end up with another union next year so that every department that we have is unionized; and you know why just well as I know why. It is because of public statements that are made by people who come forward and say, "That's it for benefits; that's it for wage increases, etc." It is in the record two years in a row – therefore, we end up where we are in this county with \$92,000.00 spent on attorney fees.

B. Sneed: The *VillageSoup* [Internet News] had a story this week that the Governor's asking every department for an across-the-board 10% cut. Have you asked the same thing of your departments?

D. Berry: That may be the case.

B. Sneed: Have you asked it?

D. Berry: No.

B. Sneed: So, that kind of thinking is not reflected in this budget.

D. Berry: No.

B. Sneed: Okay, that's all I ask.

D. Berry: Because what would happen there is the fact that you would be totally against - in doing that - what the contracts proposed. You can't do that.

B. Sneed: The State's got contracts and they're asking their department heads to come up with an across-the-board 10% cut.

D. Berry: Have we asked the question? Yes, we've asked the question of all our departments – not 10%, though. We did ask the question.

B. Sneed: Well, the devil's in the details – we'll see.

D. Berry: It is.

N. Nelson: I would say that, hopefully, this all does remain accurate but was particularly impressed to see where most of these items are in terms of increases, you know. Certainly, there is the expected Jail costs that are ever pleasurable but it looks like if this stays true, there has been a lot of hard work in people keeping serious minds about their budgets for this year.

B. Sneed: But, the Governor has purportedly asked for a 10% across-the-board cut in every one of the State departments.

N. Nelson: Do you think he'll get it?

B. Sneed: Suppose he only gets 2.5%? Look at this. Which department in here has a 2.5% cut?

N. Nelson: Quite a lot.

D. Berry: I need to share something with you here, too...

B. Sneed: Fine.

D. Berry: ..and that is the fact that we've had a happening in this county in the Sheriff's Department that was totally unexpected; and that is that the State Police have come forward and said, "We aren't doing the call sharing."

B. Sneed: We heard that last year; we know that.

D. Berry: No.

R. Desmarais: We heard that in August, some of us.

D. Berry: Right, and this is a major piece. I know the Sheriff has asked the State Police Lieutenant to come in here and explain this because they're doing that to this county, yet, at the same time, are going into more call sharing in some other counties.

N. Nelson: The way I read this - am I correct that if you remove the Jail from this budget, there is a 0.73 percent increase? That's phenomenal! That means that there is less buying power in this budget than there was in last year's - considerably less.

R. Desmarais: You've taken the air out of my next statement. I would like to see Facilities' projects that they want to do in 2009 listed by priority, so if we cut back, we are cutting back on the ones that are not as important as the ones we are letting them hold. We are here to keep expenses within reason, but we don't have enough familiarization with each department and my fear is that we are going to hurt a department when we don't need to hurt it. We just want them to either put something off to next year, and it is the same with electronics. Bill, what's that?

D. Berry: Technology.

R. Desmarais: Technology. Yes, that's the thing. If they could approach us by priority with what they want.

D. Berry: The biggest issue that we have right now, as far as Facilities, is that Superior Court building and the heat system in that thing. We have some funding out there right now doing some research on that building because it is just this great sink hole. It has to be there; we just don't have a choice.

R. Desmarais: Can I say something else? It's just a bit of information. I think it was a week ago last Wednesday night that Penobscot Valley Council of Governments held their annual meeting. We had a professor from the University of Southern Maine speak to us, and he spoke for an hour giving us statistics on where Maine is headed, not the country, but where Maine is. His expertise is called for by the Finance Committee and everything else. This guy is at the top of his game. One of the many things he addressed is this talk of a federal economic shot-in-the-arm that is coming and it's going to the states. He says what the federal government is afraid of is that the world is kind of pulling back; states have issued orders to cut here, cut there. He says that what you are doing is taking a freight train and bringing it to a stop, and they don't want that train to stop. Rather than give it to the people, they want to give this money to the states, and it is going to be \$200.00 or \$300 billion, I guess, to take care of infrastructure, put people to work, get this money going to stop everything from stopping and doing just what the Governor wants to do. Without the okay from Washington, the governors can only go one way, but this money is supposed to free that up and keep us moving. He did give an estimate for Maine; he says that this quarter and the first quarter of 2009 are still skidding to the bottom quarters; 2009 for the second and third quarters will be flat; and the fourth quarter will start a rise that will carry us into 2012. About one of those quarters and 2012, we will be above where we started taking the dive. He says, "This is by all the information that I have, and this is what I've come up with." One other thing he said is that you're going to hear unemployment reports for this quarter and the next quarter in Maine. He says not to be alarmed by them; most of them are going to the loss of part-time jobs like L.L. Bean is cutting their staff by 50%. They are going to show up in the unemployment figures, and the figure is just as good as full-timer who lost their job. So, these people losing their jobs are going to be seasonal people; a store will not hire as many as they did the year before; they are really going to drive the numbers up. I did want to bring up that with the governors' cutting back, it is up to Washington to put that money into the hands of the states to keep us moving forward.

D. Berry: He spoke at the County Conference in Presque Isle this year, too. He was very good.

R. Desmarais: Is this a guy with a big gut and about a 28" waist?

D. Berry: Yes.

R. Desmarais: He is good – a lot of information coming from him.

D. Berry: He is probably the most relied-upon person in Maine. As far as information, he is the most trusted of all of them, probably.

B. Sneed: Colgan?

D. Berry: Yes.

B. Sneed: Any thoughts on having departments prioritize stuff?

R. Crossman: Some already do, right?

B. Sneed: Should they do it for us, or should they do it for the Commissioners?

R. Crossman: I know that as a department head, I prioritize.

B. Sneed: Facilities is a prime example, and probably the worst way we've operated in the last two years. We have taken a meat axe to them in the last two years because they haven't prioritized.

R. Crossman: Well, isn't there just one Facilities Manager?

B. Sneed: Yes, but, Dick, their projects...I think the first year we cut them in half, and he just sort of said, "Oh, I can live with that – fine."

R. Desmarais: Then he went off and quit.

D. Berry: Our person right now is just absolutely excellent; I've been very impressed.

B. Sneed: We're the Budget Committee. We're not the micromanagers of this place. We get paid NOTHING. These guys [the County Commissioners] are the ones making all the big bucks to do this, and I just worry whether we should ...

D. Berry: Check out that salary, would you?

B. Sneed: Yeah, I know, I know. I mean I just worry whether the Budget Committee should be worried about departmental priorities. That is between the departments and the executives of this County, not us. Or am I off base?

R. Desmarais: You did get my drift on putting it that way, that is if we have to cut....

B. Sneed: I understand the logic of it, but I just worry about the principle of it. I mean, are we getting off base? Are we getting into places where we shouldn't be? It's a question – I honestly don't know.

R. Desmarais: One year, I made a motion to cut it from \$300,000.00 and something - I think \$303,000.00 - down to \$200,000.00. Where? I don't know where. I can't tell that man where to cut – just cut. You are asking for too much at once. That's about as much as I can put into it. You guys [the County Commissioners] work with them twelve months a year. We come for five or six meetings a year, but we're the ones who have to make the decision that is going to affect them financially.

B. Sneed: This is making my point. Why should we ask them prioritize for our purposes?

N. Nelson: I think it is important maybe to hear - I know the Facilities Manager is getting picked on right now - if their budget is increased by 30%, rather than ask them to prioritize, I would want to know, quite explicitly, why. If everything is a high priority - say there are three roofs to shingle and any of those roofs that isn't shingled immediately is going to end up costing us twice as much down the road because something has leaked or something has become damaged, I think it's our responsibility to make sure we keep an eye towards efficiency; and if efficiency is outlaying cash in one year to save it in the next, I am certainly all for that. So, I think only to that extent would I see prioritizing. Hopefully, that is what the Commissioners are doing when you spend the time to make this budget and bring it before us.

D. Berry: When you look at his Facilities Report and you see the three things that are listed there, those three things are really very important items that we have to deal with, like shingling the barn roof at the Sheriff's office. That has to be done. The handicap ramp here - the good news is we finally have the handicap ramp done out at the Extension Center. So, that is finished. Mostly, it is a couple of things.

B. Arseneau: It's usable; it's functional; there's a few finishing touches needed on it.

D. Berry: Right. I don't think it's a tough thing right now, as far as Keith [Nealley - Facilities Manager] doing that type of thing. He, basically, has computerized almost everything we are doing now.

N. Nelson: I guess all I'm saying is more than a priority of one - two - three, I would want him to say, "Items A and B need to be done or we're going to see them costing more down the road because we've...." In a sense, that prioritizes it, I guess. All I would be saying is prioritize them with explanation. If they all need to be done, don't bother to prioritize them - they're all first priority - just say why.

R. Desmarais: But, if he's got a big increase, something has to come off if it's affecting the bottom line. If it's affecting the bottom line of the whole budget, LD-1 comes to mind, then somewhere he has to cut. You can do it your way by saying, "Which one do you want to cut? or he can list them by saying, "These are my priorities and these are what I would like to do." Then, we get into the "like-to-do" before we look at the priorities. He has his finger on the pulse; he's the man.

B. Sneed: Tim?

T. Biggs: Well, I only see three things listed here, and it's capital outlay anyway.

B. Sneed: We're just picking on this department to give an example, but I just worry about the Budget Committee being seen as being micromanagers when, are we paid to do that?

R. Desmarais: We should not be running the County; that should be the Commissioners.

B. Sneed: I guess that's my point. I mean, in years past, Jim, for instance, Jim Arseneau - I mean last year, I think, he had two or three pages of stuff, and the stuff at the bottom basically fell into the

category “it would be nice, wish list.” He didn’t say it like that and it wasn’t in the budget like that, but just the way he laid it out you could tell that was the way he was tending.

R. Desmarais: What is needed and where does Santa Claus come in? We can let them take it into a little bit of Santa Claus, because the monies are such this year; but fine – he won’t be back for that next year – that will be off the list. Things are tight.

R. Crossman: I guess I was thinking maybe beyond priorities, like you were saying, where is he in playing the game of catch up?

B. Sneed: He is probably always playing catch up.

R. Crossman: I mean, how far behind is he? I think that would be helpful for us, maybe deciding where to cut money.

N. Nelson: And, to know what is next year’s project; I mean, we have three items here but we’re looking at shingling some enormous roof coming up; it would be something to look at.

B. Sneed: Dick Crossman?

R. Crossman: I just know what happened to me this summer. One month I got, “We’re sorry, but we are increasing our costs and passing it on to you by 10%,” and the next month shingles had gone up another 10%. In two months, stuff went up 20%.

B. Sneed: We had the same thing with a roof; asphalt just went, literally, through the roof. Jim?

J. Bennett: I think if we decide something is too high, then we cut the bottom line and let the Commissioners do their job with whatever department head it is.

B. Sneed: Personally, that would certainly be my preference. These guys are closer to the day-to-day, and just let them do it.

J. Bennett: If we feel it’s too high, we cut the bottom line and say, “Hey, you figure it out.”

R. Desmarais: I am okay with that; I just don’t like the idea that we might cut too much.

J. Bennett: Well, they will tell us next year.

R. Desmarais: With the Governor talking about cutting so many courthouses, do you happen to know where Waldo stands on this? Are we safe?

D. Berry: Right now, we are still safe. Right now.

R. Desmarais: Scott has no feeling or anything?

D. Berry: No. They have cut back on the amount of time they're putting in the courthouses. It was one of the things that was hurting some, because judges weren't showing up. They had no one to try; you got people sitting up here who were just sitting there. Really, it's a really tough call there.

B. Sneed: If any part of that story is worrisome, it's the cuts to the judges and the ADA's because we know that is what's driven the Jail costs, literally, through the roof. There is just no doubt that [inmates] sitting up the street here from days and months on end is what's driven that.

D. Berry: No, sitting in York County, some of them, you know, for days and months – not here.

J. Bennett: The guy from Belfast – is he going to be on the budget?

D. Berry: We don't know; he called and, I think, talked to Barbara.

B. Arseneau: What are we asking about? I'm sorry.

D. Berry: Roger Lee – what his status was.

B. Arseneau: I'm sorry; I meant to tell you at the very beginning of the meeting – he called Monday and told me that he has a family emergency situation going on, and he will not be here this week for sure. He doesn't know if he is going to resign or not; he will let me know in a week.

B. Sneed: They can fill that position, right? But, they have to fill it from within Belfast.

D. Berry: That would be in my district, so yes.

J. Bennett: Do they fill it, or do we fill it?

D. Berry: We do.

B. Sneed: No, they fill it – the City has to fill it. That happened with Dick [Crossman] last year when he had to duck back out – only Stockton Springs could have filled the vacancy.

B. Arseneau: They offered to send someone, kind of, to fill in for him for a little bit until they knew what was going on. I said that would be a good idea. It comes from them – Belfast, as long as it's from that, to fill that term.

B. Sneed: It's their call, because we found that out with Dick Crossman. It's up to the individual municipality.

D. Berry: Right, it's the town's.

B. Sneed: When can we meet again? Dick?

R. Crossman: Thursday is good for me.

B. Sneed: Tim?

T. Biggs: Any day.

B. Sneed: Harry?

H. Potter: Any day but Thursday.

B. Sneed: Any day but Thursday.

H. Potter: We meet every other Thursday, so...

R. Crossman: I meet on Monday, so Monday's out for me.

B. Arseneau: Thursdays are hard for me, too.

D. Berry: I think I gave you my schedule.

B. Arseneau: I got them from everybody; that is why I told you that it is going to be a nightmare. Actually, I didn't hear from you [R. Crossman], or I don't have it. What did you say? Not Thursday?

R. Crossman: Yeah, next Thursday we have a selectmen's meeting.

B. Sneed: The problem here is that we are late into the year now. Thursdays are no good because we have got Thanksgiving on a Thursday and Christmas on a Thursday.

B. Arseneau: That's right, that's right.

B. Sneed: So, there are two Thursdays out of the next 60 days that are just...so, Thursdays probably are not good, period.

N. Nelson: That sort of blows the Fridays after the Thursdays. I mean, Fridays are a fine day for me, but the Friday after Thanksgiving....

(Laughter.)

B. Sneed: You don't want to come in here after Christmas?

N. Nelson: Not necessarily.

B. Sneed: You're right, so...

N. Nelson: And, Wednesdays are the day our selectmen meet...

B. Sneed: Plus, Wednesday is the most busiest travel day of the year, because people are traveling.

N. Nelson: And, I can't come the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

B. Arseneau: Mondays aren't looking good?

B. Sneed: Who has selectmen meetings on Tuesdays? I do; Dick does...

B. Arseneau: Belfast has them the first and third Tuesdays.

B. Sneed: We have them the first and third Tuesdays. They can certainly live without me; they have for years.

N. Nelson: Friday would be a fine day for me.

R. Desmarais: How many can't make Friday? We probably need more than that.

B. Sneed: Fridays, we are basically in the same position as Thursdays.

N. Nelson: Can we do four Fridays and two Tuesdays, or two Mondays?

B. Sneed: I don't there is any reason not to switch around, is there, Barb, as long as we post notice in advance?

B. Arseneau: Right. I can tell that you won't have anyone here, neither Veronica or I can make it Tuesdays – Thursday I might be able to rearrange something, but Tuesdays you wouldn't have either of us, I'm sorry to say. I just wanted to let you know that.

N. Nelson: It doesn't make sense to do the Thursdays, because the Thursdays are the nights...the nights you can't do Fridays are going to be the nights you can't do Thursday. I would think that Monday of Thanksgiving week certainly would be fine for me.

B. Sneed: I can do Mondays.

T. Biggs: I can do Mondays.

D. Berry: I can't do Mondays. I teach chemistry Monday nights.

B. Sneed: How about the other guys? Can John and Amy?

B. Arseneau: As far as I know.

N. Nelson: I would think the Monday of Christmas and Monday of Thanksgiving, and otherwise Fridays, would work.

B. Sneed: It's fine with me; I can do Mondays and Fridays easily. Dick?

R. Crossman: Mondays are out for me. Any other day is fine. This is probably a little more enjoyable than town meetings; I don't have to put up with so much.

B. Arseneau: Dick McLaughlin said he can do anything but the second and fourth Monday. He said he was willing to miss a few of his.

B. Sneed: I feel the same way about Tuesdays. So, next Monday? Is next Monday a bad one for you, Dick?

R. Crossman: We meet every Monday.

B. Sneed: Oh, you meet every Monday?

N. Nelson: What about next Friday?

B. Sneed: I can do next Friday.

B. Arseneau: The seventh? [to Don] You're gone.

D. Berry: I'm gone, doing another budget that weekend.

B. Arseneau: But, the other two probably will be [available].

N. Nelson: Next Friday works for me.

B. Sneed: Dick Desmarais?

R. Desmarais: Okay with me.

B. Sneed: Jim?

J. Bennett: I can come anytime.

B. Sneed: Tim? Harry? So, a week from today, which will be the 8th.

B. Arseneau: Seventh.

D. Berry: The seventh will be the Friday.

T. Biggs: We'll decide on next Friday what we'll do for the next week, or?

B. Arseneau: Do you want me to try to get someone in now?

N. Nelson: So, next week and then the next week isn't Thanksgiving, so we have two..

B. Sneed: We can do two Fridays in a row.

B. Arseneau: Actually, you have three Fridays before Thanksgiving. You have the seventh, the fourteenth and the twenty-first.

D. Berry: Thanksgiving is late.

N. Nelson: So, I think three Fridays and a Monday would work real well for me.

R. Desmarais: Six o'clock, right?

B. Arseneau: So, plug in all of those – the seventh, fourteenth and twenty-first?

T. Biggs: Might as well.

B. Arseneau: Okay.

B. Sneed: I can take my wife out to dinner in Belfast every Friday.

T. Biggs: What would she do the rest of the time?

(Comical comments by various members and laughter.)

B. Arseneau: So, do you want to do Monday, the twenty-fifth for that last week, because that's Thanksgiving week, or is that not a good idea? [to D. Berry] I know that's not good for you.

N. Nelson: That would be fine for me.

B. Sneed: That would be the twenty-fourth though, Barbara.

B. Arseneau: Sorry, I'm looking at the wrong day – it is the twenty-fourth. Or a Wednesday that week, but that's the day before Thanksgiving for traveling.

D. Berry: If we could come up with another day of the week, we'd be all set.

J. Bennett: What if we do it twice in one week and get it over with? Do it on a Monday night or a Tuesday night and on a Friday night?

B. Sneed: Until, basically, the third week in December, Jim, for me personally, that's the one thing I can't do is two nights a week. If other people can, I'm replaceable.

N. Nelson: How many times did we meet last year? Five?

B. Arseneau: I think it was six altogether, including the Public Hearing.

N. Nelson: So, five and the Public Hearing. How many times after Thanksgiving would we get two Fridays quite quickly before Christmas?

B. Arseneau: We have two Commissioners gone, Don that first week in December...

N. Nelson: Is that essential?

(Laughter.)

B. Sneed: No, because they sit here in an advisory capacity. We don't have to have them here, but..

B. Arseneau: Two of them will be gone.

N. Nelson: So, we have one?

B. Arseneau: John doesn't go anywhere.

N. Nelson: It seems that we would get three Fridays in before Christmas, right?

B. Sneed: Five, twelve and nineteen.

N. Nelson: So, that's all Fridays and we're not even at Christmas and it's six meetings.

B. Sneed: We could have a public meeting the twenty-ninth, which would be a Monday. That would get us in under the wire, and it would satisfy everybody, except the people complained the last time we had one between Christmas and New Years.

B. Arseneau: We haven't done that for a while.

N. Nelson: So, if there's an enormous storm that night, the next night or something?

B. Arseneau: That's a really good point – we always forget about that, don't we? Because there's no snow right now.

N. Nelson: Tuesday, the thirtieth, would be...

B. Sneed: It has to be done no later than the thirty-first, though.

N. Nelson: If we schedule for the twenty-ninth, we won't have three-day snowstorm, hopefully.

(Laughter.)

R. Desmarais: Barbara, can I bring something up on the Budget Summary?

B. Arseneau: Sure.

R. Desmarais: Grant Writing 2050; it went from \$8,000.00 down to \$4,000.00. Shouldn't that be a minus sitting there instead of 100%?

D. Berry: Yes, that 100% should be a minus.

B. Arseneau: Oh, sorry. Yes.

B. Sneed: That will make the bottom line look a little better.

B. Arseneau: Grant writing...oh, yeah, you're right. That is not correct. Thank you. I'll fix that and give you a new one next time you come. Who do you want to see on the Agenda?

B. Sneed: Who is the most up in the air, still the Sheriff and the Patrol?

B. Arseneau: Oh, goodness!

B. Sneed: In terms, because of the really weird stuff, not the union stuff, but the really weird stuff with the State; or is that settled?

D. Berry: It is not settled.

B. Arseneau: No, it isn't. So, you're right. That's a hard one to start with.

B. Sneed: We have a new Assistant District Attorney?

D. Berry: Yes.

B. Arseneau: Yes, we do.

D. Berry: Yes, Eric.

B. Sneed: Well, let's bring him in and beat up on him first.

D. Berry: Oh, be nice to Eric, my gosh! Take on his boss.

B. Sneed: I'm kidding, I'm kidding.

B. Arseneau: So, you want the D.A. How many do you want to try to see and who should I put in as backups, just in case these other folks can't come in, so you can fill your time?

R. Crossman: Can't we do the 2000s all in one night?

B. Arseneau: The 2000s, except probably you don't want to try and do the Employee Benefits.

T. Biggs: It's simple; you have to pay the Interest [budget.]

B. Arseneau: Sure; probably could.

B. Sneed: There's a couple of them, the Audit, Debt Service and Interest, are just pro forma. We just have to get "what's-his-name" here and stay awake.

B. Arseneau: Dave [Parkman, Treasurer]? Okay.

B. Sneed: Yeah.

N. Nelson: University of Maine is an easy one, isn't it?

B. Sneed: Usually.

B. Arseneau: Yes.

B. Sneed: Advertising and Promotion – that's the Commissioners' Office, right?

B. Arseneau: Oh, Advertising and Promotion? No, you end up having Waldo Cap and Eastern Maine Development. Is that what you were asking? Advertising and Promotion?

B. Sneed: Oh, that's the multi one.

B. Arseneau: Yes, 1080 – WCap, Eastern Maine Development and Time & Tide.

D. Berry: Right.

B. Sneed: So, we could do 1090, 1095 and 2000 easy, right, with Dave here?

B. Arseneau: Yes; 1090, 1095 and 2000.

B. Sneed: How about the Extension folks? That usually goes quickly.

D. Berry: That's basically salary. I think we could do all of the 2000s.

N. Nelson: Except for Employee Benefits.

D. Berry: Right.

B. Sneed: Okay.

B. Arseneau: Yes. Give us a little time to put those things together for you.

T. Biggs: We'll have three meetings.

N. Nelson: Yeah, let's do it.

D. Berry: I really think you can do that – getting this thing compressed some.

B. Arseneau: So, tell me again: D.A.; the University of Maine Cooperative Extension; 1090; 1095; all of the 2000s, except Employee Benefits; and what else?

B. Sneed: Do we want to try and do the D.A. next week, as well?

B. Arseneau: That's what I have.

N. Nelson: So, the D.A. and 1090 through 2000s, except Employee Benefits.

B. Arseneau: And the University of Maine Cooperative Extensive; you wanted them, too, right?

(Multiple voices concurring.)

B. Sneed: Let's do all the 2000s, except the Benefits. Who's doing the Grant Writing; who has to speak on the Grant Writing?

B. Arseneau: The Commissioners.

D. Berry: Really, it's going to be the Commissioners, I think, speaking on that.

R. Desmarais: I have another question on this budget, just for clarification to myself. Total Jail budget for 2008 was \$2,446,700.00. I was under the impression that was going to be froze - those figures were going to be froze; and now it's up \$40,000.00, then \$400,000.00.

B. Arseneau: Do you know why? Because over the years things have been broken out that are jail-related and we were told we had to put them in - things like Employee Benefits, part of the liability insurance, part of Workers' Comp - we had to take all that stuff out and put it in, and they considered that as part of the [Jail] Cap. When they gathered all their data about what actually are jail costs, that's what they told us. We had to fill out the sheet...

R. Desmarais: Is Employee Benefits pulled out of that 1.4 million dollar block and put into the Jail and shipped out to them?

B. Arseneau: When you look at the Jail budget, you can flip back there and look and see some of those things that were pulled out from Employee Benefits.

R. Desmarais: That goes back to my whole point at the beginning of meeting - we should have those where they should be.

B. Arseneau: Yes, we need some time to put that together.

R. Crossman: Is that a true increase, or is that just bookkeeping? You have it as a 15% increase.

B. Arseneau: Well, because it's a bookkeeping thing. It is up from last year, based on what you have seen.

R. Crossman: I mean is it taking it from the left pocket and putting in the right?

D. Berry: The State's pocket.

B. Arseneau: We had to pull all those little pieces out and put it in there that were not in the Jail budget before. Does that answer everyone's question on that; is that clear?

N. Nelson: That's nice to know that.

T. Biggs: So, is it pretty clear that what we're comparing with last year is what we're comparing with this year. In other words, you say that the Benefits are put into this budget, that it's pretty clear when we go back through that we will be able to see what the additional...

B. Arseneau: Do you want to flip over there for just a minute so you can see? Go back. We put the Jail in the very back now because it's just its own animal. If you saw the size of the spreadsheet that we had to fill out, it would cover most of these two tables together if you taped it all together. So, the Treasurer's department thought it made sense to show this as summaries, but then if you go back to the very last page under Contractual, the Commissioners thought it made a lot more sense for you to be able to see those benefits broken out that way, so you know what portion of that budget now had to get put into the Jail budget. It took us from – I won't even tell you how long it took to put this together, because the State had kept clarifying things, so we got it in just under the deadline to them.

R. Crossman: So, these figures have been subtracted from the other line.

B. Arseneau: Yes.

B. Sneed: From the Employee Benefits.

B. Arseneau: Yes, and they are now included in that part that looks like an increase on the Jail.

R. Crossman: "See attached sheet" – do we have a Benefits sheet somewhere?

N. Nelson: That must be part of the reason Employee Benefits is down 36%.

B. Arseneau: Yes. It has been reduced, but it has also been reduced by the Jail portion, too. What was your question, Richard?

R. Crossman: Under Benefits, it says, "See attached sheet."

B. Arseneau: That is the last one I just showed you. I don't think the font is a particularly great color, but I tried to put in purple under Contractual lines, things that have been reduced by the Jail's portion and some of the other budgets. I tried to make it as easy to find as possible.

R. Crossman: Barbara, why are all these blanks?

B. Arseneau: Just because we would have had to provide you with this giant spreadsheet, because the State broke everything out very differently than what we normally do. Karen [Trussell] taped it together, and it was like from here to here. Just nuts, and tiny print, too.

(Many voices talking about the jail budget, etc. at the same time.)

N. Nelson: I think if you knew what the average number of employees was, you know, how many employees are involved with the Jail and the average benefit package, I think you would be very close to coming up with the accurate number.

B. Sneed: I can't see how we'd be off by more than a few percentage points.

N. Nelson: No, and the more employees, maybe that error is just going to be so small, when you look at it as a fraction or a ratio of this whole budget.

B. Sneed: 6:00 p.m. everybody, next Friday, November 7th, we're going to do 1015, 1090, 1095, 2000, 2005, 2035, 2040, 2045 and 2050.

N. Nelson: You'll e-mail this all, right?

B. Sneed: Or, I can.

N. Nelson: We do get the agenda e-mailed, right? Is that you?

B. Arseneau: Me, or Veronica - one or the other of us will send it to you. Does e-mail work for everybody? Do you get it at the town office, Jim [Bennett]? Okay.

T. Biggs: Can I leave you my personal one?

B. Arseneau: Absolutely.

T. Biggs: I'll write it down; I don't want the riffraff to know.

B. Arseneau: Okay, if you don't want it on the public sheet...you don't care?

T. Biggs: I was only kidding.

(Jokes, laughter.)

B. Arseneau: Just put it in the little column right there. So, e-mail is okay for everybody.

B. Sneed: It works for Dick McLaughlin, I know; and Roger Lee.

B. Arseneau: He told me to e-mail him and keep him in the loop until he knows what he's doing. That makes my life a lot easier; I appreciate that. Thank you.

B. Sneed: A motion to adjourn?

****J. Bennett: I make a motion we adjourn.**

N. Nelson: I second it.

B. Sneed: All in favor? All opposed? Meeting is adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Veronica Stover
Veronica Stover, Deputy County Clerk